

News Items and Public Crime Summary for Week Ending February 26, 2011

Kingdom – USFOL Plays An Important Counter Drugs Role

Dutch Foreign Affairs Minister Uri Rosenthal answered various inquiries by Dutch MP's concerning the U.S. Forward Operating Location last week.

Based on the FOL agreement in 2000 between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the United States on cooperation in the fight against illegal drug trafficking from the air, U.S. aircraft make use of the „Forward Operating Locations“ at the airports in Curacao and Aruba. The FOLs are not military bases the Dutch Minister said. The U.S. has free access to the facilities in Aruba and in the former Netherlands Antilles in order to carry out surveillance flights to detect and monitor illegal drug trafficking.

The U.S. government conveys gathered data from FOL initiated flights to Dutch Caribbean military authorities (CZMCARIB) in conformity with the agreement.

The agreement was signed for a period of ten years and renewed automatically for additional five years when none of the parliaments objected to an extension per November 2, 2011.

The FOL flights contributed to the seizure of 130,000 kilos of cocaine, 1,700 kilos of marijuana and 61 kilos of heroine in the January–November 2010 period. The FOL executed 116 flights which is 334 kilos of cocaine per mission. During the past ten years 2 million kilos of cocaine, 90,000 kilos of marijuana, and 250 kilos of heroine were intercepted based on data gathered by the FOL.

In 2010, Venezuelan authorities threatened to abandon the Isla Refinery if Venezuela detected signs of aggression from the U.S. FOL but refinery operations were never stopped for that reason. The Isla Refinery provides crucial refining capacity for Venezuela's national oil company which it leases from Curacao. Refinery closure would not impact energy security on Curacao Minister Rosenthal stated. The Minister said that during the parliamentary procedures no FOL objections were raised by Curacao political parties. (Various media)

Aruba – Valero Restarted Its Second Crude Unit

San Antonio-based Valero Energy Corp. said it has restarted a second crude unit at its refinery in Aruba, after starting another one Feb. 15. „Crude rates are increasing toward“ planned production levels according to company spokesman Bill Day. There's no estimate for when the refinery itself will return to planned rates Day said in an interview. Valero shut the refinery Feb. 4 after a freshwater storage tank collapsed, breaking several pipes that carry petroleum products. The refinery's capacity is 235,000 barrels a day.

The Aruba refinery makes finished distillates, including diesel, and intermediate feedstocks, which can supply Valero's Gulf Coast refineries and plants on the west and east coasts, according to the company's website.

Valero reported Jan. 31 that the refinery was at planned rates for the first time since it was shut indefinitely Aug. 26, 2009, after losing money in the second quarter of that

year. Since then, the company has overhauled the refinery to prepare for a restart if margins improve and to make it more attractive to buyers. (Various media)

Curacao – Swedish Ambassador Visits PM Schotte

Swedish Ambassador to the Netherlands Hakan Emsgard paid a courtesy visit to Curacao PM Gerrit Schotte. They discussed alternative energy, recycling, water management, public transportation, neighborhood development, economics, and four pending treaties between Sweden and the Kingdom of the Netherlands. (Various media)

Curacao - Brazilian Oil Giant Petrobras Wants To Do Business

Brazilian state-owned Oil Company Petrobras representatives met with the Curacao delegation visiting Brazil to discuss future business opportunities. Economics Affairs Ministers Nasser El Hakim said after the meeting that Petrobras will open an office in Curacao in preparation for the construction of a US \$29 million asphalt-related products plant which will provide jobs for 50 people. (Various media)

Aruba – Inmates Sue KIA Prison System for Overcrowding

The Aruba Court of First Instance ruled in favor of 150 prisoners who filed the lawsuit that lead to an unprecedented decision to reduce the KIA prison system significantly, a few weeks ago. The case is important because of the scale of the prisoner reduction, and also because it shines a harsh light on the failures of the government to address the problem for years.

Last week, the Joint Court of Justice suspended a Court of First Instance decision which mandated the government to reduce the number of prisoners per cell. Most prisoners are packed three to a cell.

A Joint Court of Justice decision on March 15, in favor of prisoners could be fatal, because it will paralyze our judicial system, Aruban Justice Minister Dowers said.

The Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) of the Council of Europe criticized the Aruba prison system in 2007, but their report is just a recommendation, the Minister said. Our policy is aimed at re-socialization and day programs instead of creating more cell space. (Various media)

Aruba – PM Eman Prefers Ultra Peripheral Status With EU

The European Union (EU) includes 31 overseas territories: 9 Outermost Regions and 22 Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT). They are linked to 6 Member States: Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom. The countries were invited to form association agreements with the EU and may opt in to EU provisions on freedom of movement for workers, and freedom of establishment, They are not subject to the EU's common external tariff, but may claim customs on goods imported from the EU on a non-discriminatory basis. They are not part of the EU and EU law applies to them only insofar as necessary to implement the association agreements. Aruba, Curaçao, and St. Maarten are semi-autonomous entities within the Kingdom of the Netherlands and are counted as overseas territories. The inhabitants of the islands are EU citizens owing to their Dutch nationality. Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba — collectively known as the BES islands — are special municipalities of the Netherlands. They will remain OCTs at least until 2015.

There are seven Ultra Peripheral Regions (UPR) scattered over the planet. For the EU, the fact that these regions have a strong dual identity constitutes a geo-strategic tool in areas where economic integration organizations are being set up.

The UPRs are active frontiers of the Union and guarantee the EU's presence in the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic. In that sense, they are showcases for the European model, in so far as the Euro will be circulating next year in all these regions of the world. The UPRs have a natural role to play in boosting decentralized EU cooperation and coordinating regional cooperation on the ground by acting, in some sense, as an interface.

This dual identity is a major opportunity for the UPRs and for Europe, but is also a challenge which both the regions and the Union need to tackle together. As external frontiers which are a long way from the customs territory of the Community, the UPRs are geo-strategic bases for implementing trade policies with the rest of the world. In that sense they give the EU its true spatial and planetary dimension. While the integration of the UPRs into the EU also gives them far from negligible financial advantages, it is nonetheless the case that the implementation of common, and above all trade, policies devised for economies with high added value, actually hinder the economic development of the UPRs when applied without due adaptation.

Eman believes a UPR status provides a stronger basis for foreign investors, despite various risks Aruba might take. A commonly critique is that Aruba does not have the expertise to implement EU legislation. The PM does not agree but is of the opinion that if the Euro is mandated as the national currency, Aruba will drop out, because of the nation's business with and proximity to the U.S. "If the EU cannot make an exception, we will not pursue the UPR option," Eman stated. (Various media)

Curacao – Energy Street Festival a Huge Success

American artist Niles Ford was featured in a full page interview in GO weekly magazine. Ford, the founder and artistic director of the New York-based Urban Dance Collective and two colleagues (Jessica Parks and James "Cricket" Colter III) are in Curacao upon invitation of the U.S. Consulate General to participate in the Energy Street Festival. The two-week program is filled with dance, ending with a series of flunky flashmobs and an open air dance party in downtown Willemstad. Ford said he is inspired by the energy from kids who use it to give it back to the community. "Everyone is welcome, there is no judge here! It's about winning through joining. Dance, like any other style of art, is a universal way to express yourself, with movement as your language. We are making a connection between Curacao and the World, and vice versa", Ford said.

With school workshops coordinated by the Department of Culture in the morning, and master classes in the afternoon, the organization tries to keep it accessible for all. Ford is working with a group of approximately 20 local dancers. "We're putting together a choreography inspired by local tumba dance moves, combined with African styles" he said. The Curacao Foundation of Dreams chose African Heritage as the theme of the festival which coincides with Black History Month.

GO Weekly is a free magazine which is released every Thursday with a 15.000 copies circulation a week, and over more than 200 distribution points. (Go Weekly)

Aruba - UN Women Celebrates Launch as Powerful Driver of Women's Equality

Aruba Economic, Social Affairs, and Culture Minister Michelle Hooyboer-Winklaar attended the launch of UN Women at the UN General Assembly Hall yesterday. UN Women, formally known as the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, combines four previous UN bodies and represents the United Nations' most ambitious effort ever to accelerate actions to achieve gender equality. Around the world, supporters of women's rights have heralded its debut.

"With the birth of UN Women, we welcome a powerful new agent for progress on gender equality and women's empowerment," says UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. "The challenges are great, but I believe that with the new energy, the new momentum and the new authority that UN Women brings, these challenges will be met. True gender equality should be our shared legacy in the 21st Century."

The Secretary-General appointed former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet to be the first Executive Director of UN Women. Minister Hooyboer-Winklaar and President Bachelet exchanged ideas and vision after the official launch.

UN Women will support individual countries in moving towards gender equality in economics and politics and ending the worldwide phenomenon of violence against women. It will assist in setting international standards for progress and lead coordinated UN efforts to make new opportunities for women and girls central to all UN programs for development and peace. (Various media)

CURAÇAO

Crime February 18 – 24

On February 21, a Chinese grocery store in Piscadera was robbed. On February 23, a man standing at a late-night snackbar in Santa Maria was shot and injured. The motive is unknown (Amigoe, Extra, Antilliaans Dagblad).

Curaçao Customs Investigations head retires

Franklin Calmero, head of Curaçao Customs's Investigative Division retired during a ceremony on February 21. Calmero became a Customs officer in 1969 and was promoted to head of the agency's Investigative Division in 1987. He had also been detached to St. Maarten and the former Coast Guard of the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba in the past. Calmero has been succeeded by Luthsel Lourens (45), who has been with Customs since 1992 (Extra, La Prensa).

"The Weekly Press Summary is a compilation of stories running in the Dutch Caribbean press that is intended to alert readers about items of interest to them. There is no interpretation or verification of the facts contained therein."